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Col. John Eager Howard.

RE-PRINTED FROM THE

Baltimore Gazette,

Of Monday, October 15th, 1827.

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COL. JOHN EAGER HOWARD.

John Eager Howard was born on the 4th of June, 1752, in Baltimore County, in this state. His grand-father, Joshua Howard, an Englishman by birth, having, while yet very young, left his father's house in the vicinity of Manchester, to join the army of the Duke of York, subsequently James II., during Monmouth's insurrection, was afterwards afraid to encounter his parent's displeasure, and came to seek his fortune in America. This was in the year 1685–86. He obtained a grant of the land in Baltimore County, on which Col. Howard was born, and which is still in the family, and married Miss Joanna O'Carroll, whose father had lately emigrated from Ireland. Cornelius, one of his sons by this lady, and father of the subject of this sketch, married Miss Ruth Eager, the grand-daughter of George Eager, whose estate adjoined, and now makes a considerable part of this city. The Eagers came from England, probably soon after the Charter to Lord Baltimore, but the records afford little information prior to 1668, when the estate near Baltimore was purchased.

John Eager Howard, not educated for any particular profession, was determined to that of arms by the circumstances of his country. One of the first measures of defence adopted by the colonies against the mother country, was the assemblage of bodies of the militia, termed flying camps. One

of these was formed in Maryland in 1776, and Mr. Howard was appointed to a Captaincy in the regiment of Colonel J. Carvil Hall. His commission, signed by Matthew Tilghman, the President of the Convention of Maryland, is dated the 25th of June, 1776, a few days after he had completed his twenty-fourth year. This corps was dismissed, however, in the December of the same year, Congress having required of each of the states to furnish a certain portion of regular troops, as a more effective system of defence. On the organization of the seven regiments which were to be furnished by Maryland, Captain Howard, who had been retained by the wish of the Commissioners empowered to appoint officers, rather than his own, was promoted to a Majority in one of them, the Fourth, under his former commander, Colonel Hall. His commission is dated the 10th of April, 1777. On the 1st of June, 1779, he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the Fifth, and in the following spring he was transferred to the Sixth ; and finally, after the battle of Hobkick's Hill, he succeeded to the command of the Second, in consequence of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Ford, who never recovered of a wound received in that battle.

Of the services of Colonel Howard during these years, and throughout the war, we have not limits, nor is it necessary to speak. In the chivalrous and hazardous operations of Greene in the South, he was one of his most efficient and conspicuous coadjutors. That gallant General, an exact discriminator of merit, pronounced him as good an officer as the world afforded ; to have the best disposition, and correspondent ability to promote the service ; and to have conferred great obligations on himself, and greater on the public. "He deserves," said Greene, "a statue of gold no less than Roman and Grecian heroes." "At the battle of Cowpens," says Lee, "he seized the critical moment, and turned the fortune of the day: He was alike conspicuous, though not alike successful, at Guilford and the Eutaws ; and at all times, and on all occasions, eminently useful." Besides the battles just mentioned, he was in the engagements of White Plains, of Germantown, of Monmouth,

Camden, Hobkick's Hill, and others which may be known to our readers. Having been trained to the infantry service, he was always employed in that line, and was distinguished for pushing into close battle, and with fixed bayonet; an honorable evidence of his intrepidity, as it is well known how seldom bayonets are actually crossed in battle, even with the most veteran troops. It was at Cowpens that this mode of fighting was resorted to for the first time in the war; and the Maryland Line was so frequently afterwards put to this service, as almost to annihilate that gallant corps. In this battle Colonel HOWARD, at one time, had in his hands the swords of seven officers who had surrendered to him personally. During the engagement, having ordered some movement of one of the flank companies, it was mistaken by the men for an order to retreat. While the line was in the act of falling back, Morgan rode up to him exclaiming, "that the day was lost." "Look at that line," replied Colonel HOWARD, "men who can retreat in such order, are not beaten." MORGAN then pointed out a position which he ordered him to take, and make a stand; but halting his men, and facing them about, he poured in a sudden fire on the enemy, and then, on his own responsibility, dashed on them with the bayonet. It was on this occasion that he saved the life of the British General, O'HARA, whom he found clinging to his stirrup, and claiming quarter. O'HARA afterwards addressed to him several letters, thanking him for his life.

Colonel HOWARD continued in his command till the army was disbanded, when he retired to his patrimonial estate near this city. He soon after married MARGARET CHEW, the daughter of BENJAMIN CHEW, of Philadelphia; a lady whose courteous manners and elegant hospitality will long be remembered by the society of this place, of which, as well as of the best company throughout the country, her house was the gay and easy resort. In November, 1788, Col. HOWARD was chosen the Governor of Maryland, which post he filled for three years; and having in the autumn of 1796, been elected to the Senate of the United States, to fill the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Mr. POTTS, he was, the

same session, chosen for the full term of service, which expired on the 4th of March, 1803.

The fortunate situation of Colonel HOWARD'S estate, in the immediate vicinity of Baltimore, not only placed him above the want which has pursued the old age of too many of our veterans, but was the foundation of subsequent opulence. The inconsiderable town which, at the close of the war, numbered less than ten thousand souls, has since, under the influences of that liberty which he aided in asserting, expanded to a city of seventy-two thousand, embracing by degrees within its growing streets, the venerable shades which sheltered the retired soldier. Instead of the deep forest, the precipitous hills, and the unwholesome marshes, in which commerce tempted our ancestors to plant themselves, his mansion now overlooks a large and busy mart of men, of which every rising dome and tower is in some sort a monument of his own successful patriotism. An old age warmed and enlivened by such topics of grateful reflection, is the most enviable of the conditions of human life, as well as an object of the utmost veneration and regard. Towards the soldier of the Cowpens this regard was felt, not only by his immediate neighbors, and by his former companions in arms, but by the most eminent worthies of his day. The "Father of his Country," in more than one letter, expressed to him his confidence and esteem. In one, he regrets Col. HOWARD'S declining to accept a post, as a loss both to himself and to the public, and requests in another, the interposition of a gentleman in Philadelphia, to induce the Colonel's acceptance. "Had your inclination," says WASHINGTON, in his letter to Colonel HOWARD, "and private pursuits permitted you to take the office that was offered to you, it would have been a very pleasing circumstance to me, and I am persuaded, as I observed to you on a former occasion, a very acceptable one to the public. But the reasons which you have assigned for not doing so, carry conviction along with them, and *must, however reluctantly, be submitted to.*"

At his death, Col. HOWARD was, we believe, the highest officer in rank in the Continental Service, except General LAFAYETTE. He himself did not know of any other,—Gen.

SUMTER, who is still living, having been an officer of militia, and without any Continental commission.

The character of Colonel HOWARD partook of the strength of the school in which it was trained. His first lessons, received in the thoughtful infancy of our country, had imbued his mind with the nervous and unadorned wisdom of the time. His manhood, hardened in the stormy season of the revolution, was taught patience by privation, and virtue by common example. By his worth he had won the painful station of a champion who was not to be spared from the field of action, and his sense of duty was too peremptory to permit him to refuse the constant requisitions of this perilous honor. In the camp, therefore, amidst the accidents of war, his moral constitution acquired the hardihood, and his arm the prowess, of ancient chivalry. He reached in safety the close of that anxious struggle, with a mind braced by calamity, and familiarized to great achievements. It threw him on the world in the vigor of his days, gifted with the qualities of a provident, brave, temperate and inflexible patriot. The characteristics thus acquired, never faded in subsequent life. Pursued by an unusual share of honor and regard as a founder of the liberties of his country, he was never beguiled by the homage it attracted. A fortune that might be deemed princely, was never used to increase the lustre of his station, or the weight of his authority, but was profusely dispensed in public benefactions, and acts of munificence. With the allurements of power continually soliciting his ambition, he never threw himself into the public service but when the emergencies of the state left him no privilege of refusal. Under such conditions only, he administered the grave duties of office, with an integrity, wisdom and justice, that gave to his opinions an authentic and absolute sway.

Amidst the frantic agitations of party, which for a series of years convulsed the nation, he almost alone in his generation, won the universal confidence. The most inveterate popular prejudices seemed to yield to the affectionate conviction of his impregnable honesty, his unblenching love of country, and that personal independence which neither

party zeal could warp from its course, nor passion subvert, nor faction alarm; and in their bitterest exacerbations, his fellow-citizens of all ranks turned towards him as to a fountain of undefiled patriotism. In private life he was distinguished for the amenity of his manners, his hospitality, and his extensive and useful knowledge. He possessed a memory painfully minute; and a love of information that never sank under the labor of acquisition. These faculties rendered him, perhaps, the most accurate repository of the history of his own time, in this or any other country. His habits of life were contemplative, cautious, scrupulously just, and regulated by the strictest method.

Few men have enjoyed a more enviable lot; his youth distinguished in the field, his age in the council, and every period solaced by the attachment of friends. Affluent in fortune, as rich in public regard, and blessed in his domestic and personal associations, he has glided away from the small band of his compatriots, as full of honors as of years. The example of such a citizen is a legacy to his country, of more worth than the precepts of an age.

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